

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT WASHPOST EDITORIAL, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11 HEADLINED "AN UNACCEPTABLE DEAL".

2. THIS NEWSPAPER CARRIED AN ASTOUNDING HEADLINE ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE STYLE SECTION IN YESTERDAY'S LATE EDITIONS. "CHINESE CANCEL ART PREVIEW," IT READ. WHAT MADE IT SO ASTOUNDING IS THE FACT THAT THE ART PREVIEW IN QUESTION WAS NOT TO BE HELD IN PEKING OR NANKING, BUT RIGHT HERE IN WASHINGTON AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART. THE EXHIBITION TO BE PREVIEWED, TO BE SURE, IS A DISPLAY OF ARCHEOLOGICAL FINDS OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, SENT HERE, AFTER SHOWINGS IN PARIS, LONDON, STOCKHOLM, VIENNA AND TORONTO, BY THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC GOVERNMENT. THE PREVIEW, HOWEVER, WAS ARRANGED BY THE NATIONAL GALLERY FOR THE CONVENIENCE OF THE PRESS. REPORTERS, CRITICS AND PARTICULARLY TELEVISION CAMERAMEN AND COMMENTATORS CAN

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DO A BETTER JOB OF COVERING IMPORTANT EXHIBITIONS IF THEY

ARE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE, CONTEMPLATE AND PHOTO-GRAPH THE MATERIAL AT SOME LEISURE BEFORE THE RUSH OF THE PUBLIC OPENING. THE OPPORTUNITY, OF COURSE, MUST BE GIVEN TO ALL OF THE PRESS. THERE IS NO WAY IN THIS COUNTRY TO EXCLUDE ANYONE WITH LEGITIMATE PRESS CREDENTIALS.

3. THE LIAISON OFFICE OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA APPARENTLY INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE GALLERY DENY ADMISSION TO CORRESPONDENTS FROM COUNTRIES WITH WHICH CHINA IS AT ODDS -- TAIWAN, SOUTH KOREA, ISRAEL AND SOUTH AFRICA. THE NATIONAL GALLERY COULD NOT POSSIBLY ACCEDE TO THEIR DEMAND. BUT NEITHER -- AND HERE IS THE RUB -- WAS IT FREE TO TELL THE CHINESE THAT PRESS PREVIEWS AT THE GALLERY ARE THE GALLERY'S BUSINESS AND THAT IN THIS COUNTRY WE BELIEVE IN EQUAL ACCESS FOR ALL ACCREDITED NEWS ORGANIZATIONS. UNDER THE AGREEMENT THE STATE DEPARTMENT NEGOTIATED WITH THE CHINESE SOME WEEKS AGO, THE CHINESE SEEM TO HAVE BEEN GIVEN A VOICE NOT ONLY IN MATTERS RELATED TO THE PROTECTION OF THEIR TREASURES, BUT ALSO IN OTHER ARRANGEMENTS CONCERNING THE EXHIBIT. NEITHER THE STATE DEPARTMENT NOR THE GALLERY HAS SO FAR MADE PUBLIC JUST WHAT THE AGREEMENT PROVIDES. BUT IF IT ACTUALLY GIVES THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT THE RIGHT TO EXCLUDE JOURNALISTS FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, IT OBVIOUSLY GOES MUCH TOO FAR. THE NATIONAL GALLERY, WE FEEL, WAS ENTIRELY RIGHT IN CANCELING THE PRESS PREVIEW. AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT SHOULD NOW TELL THE AMERICAN PUBLIC EXACTLY WHAT IT AGREED TO. ALMOST NOBODY DISPUTES THE VALUE OF THE CELEBRATED OPENING TO CHINA. BUT PRESUMABLY THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO OPENING UP OF RELATIONS IN A VARIETY OF WAYS WERE IT NOT IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHINESE AS WELL AS OURSELVES. AND IF THAT IS SO, THIS COUNTRY OUGHT NOT TO HAVE TO PAY FOR IT BY SELLING OUT, EVEN IN A SMALL WAY, PRINCIPLES THAT ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO OUR SOCIETY. (END TEXT). INGERSOLL

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